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SUBJECT: TEACHERS APPROACH STRIKE DEADLINE

REF: A. CONAKRY 0684
[1](#)B. CONAKRY 0274

[1](#)1. (SBU) Elhadj Sy Savane, the deputy secretary general of Guinea's teachers' union (FSPE-SLECG), told POL LES that the union will be meeting throughout the day on November 10 in order to decide whether or not to resume a nationwide labor strike that was suspended in June (reftel A). Savane initially said that the union would not meet with any government representatives, including the prime minister, because "there was nothing to negotiate." He pointed out that the GoG had already signed a negotiated agreement in June, but failed to implement it. Later in the day, Savane said that the union had agreed to meet with Prime Minister Souare to avoid appearing as if union representatives are opposed to dialogue with the government.

[1](#)2. (SBU) When asked about the World Bank's recent announcement of a \$10 million grant to the GoG, which is intended to help the GoG pay teacher salaries and other education sector expenses, Savane said that the grant is irrelevant. According to Savane, the grant has nothing to do with the union's grievances. He pointed out that the World Bank's disbursement procedures would take some time and that the teachers cannot afford to wait for the grant to be released before receiving their salaries. Other union contacts have told Embassy staff that the grant is only a short-term fix to the salary problem, and that the funding would not be available in future years.

COMMENT

[1](#)3. (SBU) The World Bank grant should address most of the union's outstanding immediate economic demands, although the money may not be released as quickly as the GoG and the union would like. Regardless, the union may be considering a strike in order to capitalize on the recent civil unrest to advance a broader political agenda. In past meetings with Poloff, Savane has been a passionate advocate for change, shrugging off the possibility of violence as an unfortunate, but necessary risk. As the union was preparing for a strike in the aftermath of the military mutiny in June, he told Poloff "this whole situation is explosive, whether our strike provides the spark, or something else does, that is not our responsibility." The teachers' union has repeatedly claimed credit for "starting things off" in 2006, saying that it took the initiative to spark action, and that the strikes in 2007 came about because the other labor unions built upon the momentum the teachers had already established (reftel B).

[1](#)4. (SBU) Where other labor unions have been more cautious in recent months, the teachers' union is one of the few that has pushed the government to respond. Students are likely to sympathize with the teachers and be frustrated with the GoG's continued failure to satisfy their demands. The union's

recently added demand to further reduce the price of fuel may
help attract widespread popular support. END COMMENT.
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